

Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. GovernorLarry Hogan
GovernorSam Abed
Secretary

DATE: February 17, 2021
Bill Number: SB 497 – Juvenile Services Education Board and Program –
Establishment, Powers, and Duties
DJS Position: Support

The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS or department) supports SB 497. SB 497 creates an independent school board which would assume responsibility from the Maryland Department of Education for educating youth housed in DJS facilities.

DJS has worked collaboratively with the bill sponsors and stakeholders, including the independent Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU) and the Office of the Public Defender, to develop a framework that strikes an appropriate balance with an independent board to provide oversight and assistance from DJS to manage day-to-day operational requirements.

SB 497 creates an independent board to ensure high-quality education.

Educational policy would be decided by and implemented through an independent 11-member school board, with appointees including the Secretary of DJS, the Secretary of Higher Education, the State Superintendent of Schools, the Attorney General, a representative of the Public School Superintendents’ Association of Maryland, and six appointed members with child and education focused-knowledge and experience.

SB 497 leverages existing DJS capabilities to provide administrative and support services.

By locating the Juvenile Services Education Board within the department, the Board will have access to the full range of support services, including information technology, procurement, and hiring, needed to effectively deliver high-quality educational programming within detention and committed facilities.

SB 497 creates a robust system of quality assurance, accountability and transparency.

The Juvenile Services Education Board is directed to work with the JJMU to identify outcome measures and minimum educational standards, with DJS required to provide regular quality assurance reports to both the Board and the General Assembly.

SB 497 fosters partnerships with local schools and community colleges.

The Juvenile Services Education Board would be required to coordinate with local school systems and to form partnerships with local schools, nonprofits, or community colleges to deliver programming for students who have graduated from high school or earned a GED.

SB 497 removes barriers to school re-enrollment after release.

Currently, the placement of a young person in a DJS facility results in their un-enrollment from their local school system. Re-enrollment requires the parent/guardian to start an entirely new enrollment process, including providing a birth certificate and proof of residency. This bill stops that practice by allowing a youth to be dually enrolled unless committed to DJS for treatment.

DJS urges a favorable report on SB 497.